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FROM FIELD AND STUDY

A Note on the Food of the Western Robin.—In front of the Biological Station building at Flathead Lake, Montana, a small spring seeps into the lake, making a damp spot in the sand of the lake shore. Here, in the month of July swarms of butterflies congregate to drink. The butterflies are principally of two species, *Papilio rutulus*, a large yellow and black one, and *Papilio eurymedon*, an equally large one in cream color and black. These butterflies became so absorbed in their drinking that they could be easily approached and sometimes picked up in the fingers. One day, I was much amused to notice that a Robin (*Planesticus migratorius propinquus*) took advantage of this and found them a ready source of food supply. The bird would approach and watch until one fluttered its wings, and then would seize it and swallow it wings and all. I watched it for some time, and noticed that the yellow butterflies were the only ones eaten, although the others outnumbered them almost three to one. Whether the brighter color attracted the bird to these, or the others were distasteful, cannot be said with certainty, but I believe the former to be the case. A chipmunk, which also fed on these butterflies, caught and ate both species, carrying them to the shelter of a log, where it discarded the wings, leaving them in a large heap.—ARETAS A. SAUNDERS, *New Haven, Connecticut*.

Slight Extension of Range of San Diego Titmouse.—On December 19, 1915, at least two San Diego Titmice (*Baeolophus inornatus murinus*) were noted with a flock of Bush-tits (presumably *Psaltiriparus minimus minimus*) among the junipers on the high mesa at the south edge of the Mohave Desert, the exact spot being approximately five miles south and four miles west of Hesperia, San Bernardino County, California. The mesa at this place is about 3800 feet altitude and less than a mile farther south drops off abruptly into Cajon Pass, through which there would be no physical barriers to the localities on the other (south) side of the western portion of the San Bernardino Range, regularly inhabited by this subspecies. The junipers end a half mile north of this record, where typical Lower Sonoran vegetation immediately replaces it. One of the two birds was taken, an adult female (no. 4587 coll. J. E. Law) and has been pronounced "*murinus*" by J. Grinnell after comparison with the series of both "*inornatus*" and "*murinus*" in the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

The weather was at this time, and had been recently, entirely normal, clear warm days and crisp frosty nights, and the birds seemed to be very much at home, as were the bush-tits. Flocks of the latter and at least one "*murinus*" were observed on the 20th. Unfortunately no bush-tits were collected, for this is near the recorded desert limit of its range as well.—J. EUGENE LAW, *Hollywood, California*.

Nature of the Occurrence of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Humboldt County, California.—It would appear from Pacific Coast Avifauna no. 11 (p. 135) that the Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Zamelodia ludoviciana*) continues to be known from California upon but very scanty basis. Since the undersigned was concerned in the first one of the three known instances of occurrence, it may be of interest to present additional details.

On July 1, 1897, our party found this Grosbeak so abundant in the orchard at Myer's, Humboldt County, California, as to be a pest. The people on the ranch made a business of shooting the birds to keep them from eating all the fruit. Males and females were present and were seen by us, and, as elsewhere recorded, specimens were saved. Can it be doubted that they were breeding that summer and that a considerable colony was present in that region? While it may be true that the species is a "sporadic visitant" in California, it would seem certain that, in the year in question, either a flock of considerable size had gone astray and reached the Myer's ranch or that we had to deal with a colony of several years' standing.—C. H. GILBERT, *Stanford University, California*.

Additional Notes on the Birds of Kootenai County, Idaho.—

Marila valisineria. Canvas-back Duck. Rare fall visitant. A young male, found with its neck broken, floating in Lake Coeur d'Alene near a boat house, March 10, 1915, may have struck piling or a building in the dark, causing the accident. Reports that Canvas-back Ducks have been taken on the lake for several years past have come to my notice, but this is the only specimen I have examined.

Canachites franklini. Franklin Grouse. Not common resident of the heavily timbered sections. An adult female examined October 10, 1915.

Aquila chrysaetos. Golden Eagle. Rare. An adult male examined, taken October 11, 1915.

Otus asio macfarlanei. Macfarlane Screech Owl. Rare resident. A specimen in the gray phase examined January 18, 1916. It was taken in a pigeon coop within the city limits, having forced its way into the coop and killed and partly devoured a pigeon when taken.

Regulus calendula. Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Common in spring in fir thickets. Probably resident. Specimen taken April 20, 1915.

On December 9, 1915, I was surprised to hear faint notes of the Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana occidentalis*?) and discovered three individuals flying rather low over the housetops. Later I was told that three Bluebirds had spent two days, December 10 and 11, in and about a bird house in a pine tree in this city not far from where I had noticed them flying overhead. The weather being not far from zero, and with deep snow, this struck me as being an unusual record for Bluebirds in this vicinity.

During the extreme cold weather and deep snow prevailing from January 1 to 20 of this year, many small owls, particularly the Saw-whet (*Cryptoglaux acadicus*) and Screech Owls, took refuge in barns and outbuildings, and were attacking pigeons and chickens. In one instance a Saw-whet had killed and partly eaten a bantam chicken.—HENRY J. RUST, *Coeur d'Alene, Idaho*.

Plumage of the Young Male Red-shafted Flicker.—Near the Biological Station at Flat-head Lake, Montana, I found last summer a nest of the Red-shafted Flicker (*Colaptes cafer collaris*) containing six well grown young. In the process of banding these young, I noticed that one of the birds was already equipped with the red mustache marks, the feathers then just breaking the sheaths. In all the books in which I have searched for information on this subject the statement is made that young flickers lack the mustaches. This observation, however, indicates that in some individuals the young male has this mark, even in the nestling plumage.—ARETAS A. SAUNDERS, *New Haven, Connecticut*.

Concerning Vernacular Names of *Passer domesticus*.—In looking over THE CONDOR of January, 1916, I notice, in treating of a publication by Ernest Harold Baynes, that the reviewer, among other things, says: "The English Sparrow, or European Sparrow as Mr. Baynes calls it, apparently has no terrors for the author;" etc., etc. This brought back to me the thought that has often occurred to me before, why this unwelcome alien should be so persistently known as the "English" Sparrow. If the bird was originally brought over from England, one would not consider the name unfair, but England is a small spot on the map of Europe, and who knows from what country it was really introduced into North America?

I have found no record as to this; Chapman, in his "Handbook", states that it was "first introduced into the United States at Brooklyn, N. Y., in 1851 and 1852"; but from what country and by whom is not stated. I believe that I am not alone in the opinion that "House Sparrow" or "European Sparrow" would be far better, and more correct.—H. H. MITCHELL, *Provincial Museum, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada*.

Auburn Canyon Wren: An Objection.—Having often thought over just the point brought up by Dawson in the last CONDOR, page 33, I would like to offer a few opinions of my own; all in a most friendly spirit of discussion.

I do not believe that vernacular names should be governed by as strict rules of priority as are the scientific names, for it is well to have a loop-hole through which to crawl in case of a serious error, or, as in the case of the "Louisiana" Tanager, when subsequent alterations of political boundaries make the old name too misleading. I approve of the change to the name of Western Tanager, and I think it high time that some of the other misleading geographical names of birds were changed.

The case of *Catherpes m. punctulatus* is a different matter, however. The bird is dotted, although this character is not as noticeable as the prevailing color, of course. Uniformity in all things is desirable, and especially so in scientific matters. If we alter one English name to another that is slightly more appropriate, the whole A. O. U. Check List should be gone through and revised. Dotted Canyon Wren is no more offensive to

the discriminating mind and eye than is Dwarf Hermit Thrush, Summer Tanager and a hundred others in our avifauna, but I imagine there are few who would advise such sweeping changes.

By all means, let all who wish, call *Oceanodroma homochroa*, Coues Petrel, or call *Catherpes m. punctulatus*, Ridgway Canyon Wren. That is entirely permissible, but why not be uniform and call the birds either after the describer, or as those gentlemen intended they should be named.

Another thing to which I should like to call attention, and which I deplore, is the practice often followed by some men I know (and mighty good friends I consider them too) of calling birds by nicknames. For instance, a short time ago I was privileged to see some truly remarkable photographs of birds, the "names" of which were written on the backs. That of a flock of Black-crowned Night Herons was labelled "Squawks"; one of Black-bellied Plovers was "Grey Plovers"; Western Sandpipers was "Sand Peeps", and several others similarly. These names may be very expressive, and, if a man has a fair ornithological education, they will be understood, but the majority of the copies of these photos will probably fall into the hands of people whose knowledge of birds is limited. It is most important that the little which the lay public knows about birds, shall be correct. While a very small youngster, and just starting to collect single, end-blown eggs with the help (?) of a couple of popular bird books, I can clearly remember what difficulty I had in trying to distinguish between the Kingbird, as given in one book, and the Bee Martin in the other. I have never since forgiven the author of the latter.—A. B. HOWELL, *Tucson, Arizona*.

A New Fly Trap.—The English Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) is by far the most abundant bird in the cities of Imperial Valley, outnumbering all other birds (in the city districts) about ten to one. I have noticed them on several occasions congregated around store fronts early in the mornings while the air was still very cold. Close observation showed that the birds were industriously making hearty breakfasts of the flies which had settled on the store fronts the warm evening before, and were now benumbed with the cold. The supply of flies seemed inexhaustible but these imported fly traps must have eaten enormous quantities. I have seen the flies so thick that they could be brushed up by the quart. If the supply of English Sparrows in Imperial Valley can be increased sufficiently the fly question in that section ought to be solved, for flies, like English Sparrows, seem to thrive around our smaller cities and towns.—W. LEE CHAMBERS, *Eagle Rock, California*.

Mexican Ground Dove at San Diego.—A male Mexican Ground Dove (*Chaemepelia passerina pallescens*) was shot inside the city limits of San Diego on November 10, 1915, by H. G. Keith of this city. The bird is now in the collection of the San Diego Natural History Society.—HENRY GREY, *San Diego, California*.

An Early Record of American Scoter for California.—In sorting over an old box of bones here, I found the head, wing bones and feet of a bird, bearing the following data: 44931, *Oidemia americana*, ♀, San Luis Obispo, Cal., Spring, 1866, W. F. Schwartz. On the back of the label, in Baird's handwriting, is the statement: "First spec. fr. Pacific Coast. Keep." I do not know whether this information has any particular significance, since it appears Baird had recorded the species from Fort Steilacoom in his report of 1858, but it occurred to me this might be the first record for California and therefore of possible general interest.—CHAS. W. RICHMOND, *Assistant Curator, Division of Birds, U. S. National Museum, Washington, D. C.*

Mexican Ground Dove, Western Grasshopper Sparrow, and California Cuckoo at Escondido, San Diego County, California.—During the spring and summer of 1915 several species of birds were observed at Escondido, California (elevation 750 feet), which have not been found there commonly before; their appearance seems worthy of recording. It might be stated here that the rainfall during the spring of 1915 was excessive, which resulted in an *extended* as well as good growth of vegetation so that such birds as the Cuckoo and Ground Dove might have been led to wander farther than usual from their regular range.

The first stranger was noted April 13, 1915, by Charles Schnack who found what he thought was the nest of a Savannah Sparrow; but not being sure of the species asked me to come with him prepared to collect the bird on the nest if need be. The species proved to be the Western Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum bimaculatus*). The nest was located in an extensive, alkaline, salt-grass meadow. It was placed beside a clump of salt grass which originally covered the nest, in part, at least, shielding the brooding female from the more nearly vertical rays of the sun. The nest cavity seemed to have been scratched out, and the nest was very thin on the bottom so that the back of the brooding female on the nest was almost flush with the surface of the ground.

When we approached the nest the female flattened out on the nest and watched us anxiously. She flushed when we were about six feet away and after we had stood still for several seconds conversing in whispers upon the color pattern of the back and the lack of a decided yellow streak over the eye. The bird slipped off the nest with no trace of commotion, and ran, or rather sneaked away, using every available tuft of grass as a screen to hide behind. When she reached a little ridge about twenty feet away she hopped up in plain sight, and took a flying hop to another ridge a few feet farther away. To a passer-by she would appear to have flushed from a point some twenty feet away from the nest. Mr. Schnack observed the bird when she left the nest several times, and he said that this was her characteristic way of leaving it. The male could be heard uttering a faint insect-like *chip* from some clod or small ridge nearby, but he was very shy and kept circling the nest at a distance.

The nest was built entirely of fine dead weed stalks loosely pressed together. I have been able to identify some of the stalks as of wild oat and salt grass, but the majority are not identifiable. It was well lined with fine dry grass and grass-seed heads frazzled out, there being no feathers, fur or other animal matter.

The outside dimensions of the nest were, horizontally, 125 mm. (5½ inches) by 113 mm. (5 inches), with a depth of 43 mm. (2¼ inches). The inner cavity measured 69 mm. (3¼ inches) by 63 mm. (3 inches), with a depth of 30 mm. (1¼ inches).

Incubation was from one-third to one-half completed in the four eggs, on April 14. The egg-shells have a ground color almost white with only a suggestion of blue. The individual markings on the eggs average about a square millimeter in area and are arranged in a band from three to five millimeters wide around the more central part of the egg. The position of this band is much nearer to the center of the egg than it is to the large end. This seems to be a good distinguishing character for the eggs of the Grasshopper Sparrow. The under-shell markings are a pale violet-plumbeous, while the brighter surface spots are about hazel. One egg has been cracked in transit and the others measure in millimeters as follows: 18.3x15.7; 18.8x14.6; 17.5x14.7.

The female bird was secured as she left the nest and is now no. 25866 in the collection of the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. The male and eggs with nest were secured also, the male being no. 25865, while the nest with eggs is numbered 1617.

A female Savannah Sparrow (in migration of course) was secured within a few feet of the nest of the Grasshopper Sparrow. Several other pairs of Grasshopper Sparrows were seen or heard in this one salt grass patch, but their presence was certainly outside the regular order of things as none had been observed about this place during the fifteen or twenty years previous to this date.

On June 29, 1915, a male Mexican Ground Dove (*Chaemepelia passerina pallescens*) in full breeding plumage and actions was observed by my brother, J. B. Dixon. This bird frequented a stretch of marshy, willow-grown river bottom about three miles north of town. His intense cooing attracted attention, and he is now no. 25862 in the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

June 30, 1915, revealed the first California Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) that we had observed in San Diego County. This was a female which was mistaken for a small hawk as it dashed through a willow thicket where there were young chickens. The cuckoo call had been heard several days previously to this, and the specimen (now no. 25863, Mus. Vert. Zool.), had the bare flabby abdomen of a brooding bird. Another (male?) bird was heard a few days later and several weeks later immature Cuckoos were seen and heard calling in the willows.—JOSEPH DIXON, *Berkeley, California*.

Ring-necked Duck near Corona, Riverside County, California.—While shooting on the grounds of the Pomona Recreation Club near Corona, Riverside County, California, on December 12, 1915, I flushed a strange duck from the tules. The bird was taken and proved to be a female Ring-necked Duck (*Marila collaris*). As there are few published records of this bird from southern California I thought this worthy of note. The bird is now in my collection.—WRIGHT M. PIERCE, *Claremont, California*.

Odd Performance of a Flicker with a Malformed Bill.—Attracted to an upstairs window in the early morning of January 18, 1916, by the apparent nearness of a woodpecker's drumming, I found a Red-shafted Flicker (*Colaptes cafer collaris*) resting within five feet of my eyes, on a square galvanized iron drain, which extended down from the extending eaves to the house wall, at an angle of twelve or fifteen degrees. I was much surprised to note that its lower mandible curved gradually downward from the base and had grown nearly if not quite an inch longer than the upper mandible, which seemed perfectly straight and normal. At first, assuming that this bird had done the drumming, I concluded that this obvious deformity must be its tongue, for some reason kept extended. The bird's position, however, was such that it was silhouetted against the sky and it shortly satisfied that point by unmistakably extending and moving its real tongue.

But, to cap the climax, it turned its head to the left and drummed, turning it far enough so that a line between the points of the two mandibles would be at right angles to the axis of the body, in which position the lower mandible was out of the way and the upper free to drum. And drum it did, not once, but time and again with long pauses between, always turning its head with crown to the left. In the drumming its whole body vibrated, so much so that it literally rattled down the drainpipe backward a little each time it drummed.

As the sky was heavily overcast, I was unable to make out its sex. But it strikes me as notable that in spite of its deformity it had maintained itself in good enough condition and spirits to sense the mating instincts, of which drumming is undoubtedly one. Not only that, but it heads the spring procession, as the first drumming for 1916, heard on one of our drains January 12, was probably by this same bird: Rather earlier in the season than we are accustomed to expect it, though for a month or so each early spring our resonant metal work is a favorite sounding board for flickers at unreasonably early hours.—J. EUGENE LAW, *Hollywood, California*.

The Old-squaw in West-central California.—On November 21, 1915, an Old-squaw (*Harelda hyemalis*) was taken by Master James M. Moffitt on the Suisun Marshes, Solano County. A careful examination of the bird in-the-flesh left no doubt in my mind as to its identity.—JOHN W. MAILLIARD, *San Francisco, California*.

Additions and Changes to the Summer Birds of Flathead Lake, Montana.—Work during the summer of 1915 at the Biological Station at Flathead Lake has resulted in several additional species, and some changes in the identifications of others. With the new species I have included two found by Mr. Silloway, the records of which have never been published. The new species are as follows:

Hydrochelidon nigra surinamensis. Black Tern. While waiting at Somers for a boat to take me to Yellow Bay, I saw a pair of these birds flying over a small slough that was overgrown with rushes and cat-tails. From the actions of the birds when I approached the slough, I believe they were breeding, but since I was still travelling and not dressed for wading in a marsh I was unable to investigate.

Spatula clypeata. Shoveller. I saw a single bird of this species on the Pend-Oreille River near Polson, July 27.

Phalaenoptilus nuttalli nuttalli. Poorwill. This bird was heard calling in the hills back of Polson on the evening of July 26.

Archilochus alexandri. Black-chinned Hummingbird. Mr. Silloway has seen this bird in the vicinity of Yellow Bay, but the date of this occurrence is not given.

Empidonax hammondi. Hammond Flycatcher. Observations this season have shown that this flycatcher is not uncommon in the forests about Flathead Lake. It was first noted June 24, on a mountain slope back of Yellow Bay. A specimen was secured on Wild Horse Island, July 2. A nest was found near the station at Yellow Bay, June

26. This nest was saddled on the horizontal limb of a tamarack at a height of about twenty-five feet. It was observed frequently from the day it was found until the young flew late in July.

Passerculus sandwichensis alaudinus. Western Savannah Sparrow. First noted near Somers on June 23. Later found to be fairly common in the vicinity of Polson. Specimens were secured at Polson Swamp, July 12, and at Polson, July 27. These birds were examined by L. B. Bishop, who states that they are evidently not typical of any race. The first is a bird in juvenal plumage, and is nearest to *nevadensis*. The second, an adult, is more like *alaudinus*.

Vermivora rubricapilla gutturalis. Calaveras Warbler. There is a specimen of this bird in the collection of the University of Montana, taken by Mr. Silloway at Yellow Bay, August 6, 1912. This is evidently the first record of the species in Montana.

Penthestes rufescens rufescens. Chestnut-backed Chickadee. I found this bird fairly common in the forests near Yellow Bay, in flocks in company with the Long-tailed Chickadee. It was seen frequently, and a specimen secured on June 30..

Changes in identification and other notes follow.

Bonasa umbellus togata. Canada Ruffed Grouse. The bird occurring in this region has previously been recorded as *B. u. umbelloides*. If it is true that *umbelloides* always has a gray tail, then many of the birds of this region must belong to *togata*, for examination of specimens in the University of Montana collection, as well as observations in the field, show many birds with reddish-brown tails and the heavily marked under parts of *togata*. In the L. B. Bishop collection are a number of specimens of this bird from Columbia Falls, a point about twenty-five miles north of Flathead Lake. Some of them are referable to one form and some to the other, yet none of them show enough difference to warrant the assumption that there are two forms found in this region. I believe that the differences are entirely those of individual variation, but what to call the form in this region is a puzzle.

Picoides americanus fasciatus. Alaska Three-toed Woodpecker. An adult male, secured July 1, at Yellow Bay, was identified by L. B. Bishop as of this race. My observations in the field also go to show that this is the regular breeding race in this region, instead of *P. a. dorsalis*, the birds showing much less white on the back than do those of southern Montana.

Junco hyemalis montanus. Montana Junco. A male bird, secured at Wild Horse Island, July 2, proved to belong to this race, and not to *J. h. connectens*, the race originally attributed to this region.

Melospiza melodia merrilli. Merrill Song Sparrow. A specimen secured at Polson Swamp, July 12, was identified as of this race rather than *M. m. montana*. *Merrilli* is probably the regular breeding bird of the region.

Ammodramus savannarum bimaculatus. Western Grasshopper Sparrow. A nest of this bird, containing four eggs in an advanced state of incubation, was found at Polson, July 27. Since I know of no other definite record of the finding of a nest of this species in Montana, though the bird's occurrence in summer has been noted frequently, I wish to publish this record here.—ARETAS A. SAUNDERS, *New Haven, Connecticut*.

Nesting of the Western Bluebird at Ventura, California.—On June 14, 1915, a pair of Western Bluebirds (*Sialia mexicana occidentalis*) were observed feeding their young in a crevice under the cornice of one of the office buildings in Ventura.—RALPH ARNOLD and J. R. PEMBERTON, *Los Angeles, California*.

The Belted Kingfisher Wintering in Fresno County.—Sufficient evidence has accumulated to warrant the statement that *Ceryle alcyon* winters sparingly in the Fresno district. January 11, 1913, a single individual was seen to fly from his perch on Skagg's Bridge, on the San Joaquin River. January 18, 1913, another was noted on a willow tree over a small creek at the edge of the hills north of Sanger. December 24, 1915, a Kingfisher flew across the road near a small canal at Firebaugh. January 26, 1916, one was noted on a telephone wire near Oxalis, and I was informed that at least two had been present all through the winter. The above records would seem to indicate a slight extension of the range as given in Pacific Coast Avifauna no. 11, page 76.—JOHN G. TYLER, *Fresno, California*.